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Track-change diplomacy: Technology, affordances and the practice of international negotiations

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Abstract

How does technology influence international negotiations? This article explores ‘track-change diplomacy’ – how diplomats use information and communication technology (ICT) such as word processing software and mobile devices to collaboratively edit and negotiate documents. To analyze the widespread but understudied phenomenon of track-change diplomacy, the article adopts a practice-oriented approach to technology, developing the concept of *affordance*: the way a tool or technology simultaneously enables and constrains the tasks users can possibly perform with it. The article shows how digital ICT affords *shareability*, *visualization* and *immediacy* of information, thus shaping the temporality and power dynamics of international negotiations. These three affordances have significant consequences for how states construct and promote national interests; how diplomats reach compromises among a large number of states (as text edits in collective drafting exercises); and how power plays out in international negotiations. Drawing on ethnographic methods, including participant observation of negotiations between the EU’s member states as well as in-depth interviews, the analysis casts new light on these negotiations, where documents become the site of both semantic and political struggle. Rather than delivering on the technology’s promise of keeping track and reinforcing national oversight in negotiations, we argue that track-change diplomacy can in fact lead to a loss of control, challenging existing understandings of diplomacy.

Introduction

We appreciate the hard work you have done on this file. We are ready to lift our reservations on the text. As regards the outstanding issue, I have a very strange instruction [laughter around the table], but the compromise just proposed by Tom can be a way forward (Ambassador at Coreper 1, 18.02.2015; Nielsen 2015).

This is how a national ambassador explains his country's position in the European Union (EU). What is said may initially appear trivial (the laughter occurred because everyone around the table recognized that the ambassador felt a need to signal a subtle difference between the outcome and the instructions he had received from their capital), but it demonstrates how diplomats promote national interests during international negotiations. The ambassador in the quote above refers to his colleagues' preparations prior to the meeting in terms of editing the document – a Word file – which has led to a draft text they are willing to accept. It serves as the perfect example of contemporary multilateral negotiations. These days, multiple authors, based in multiple locations find compromises using collaborative text drafting software, email and mobile devices. The track-change function in word processing software should, in principle, make text changes and revisions more visible during negotiations than would otherwise be the case. Yet, in actuality, the opposite happens. As we shall see, when hundreds of people negotiate on a document at high speed, track-changes can be an instrument of (at times intentional) opacity, rather than transparency, and diplomats can lose control. How can we explain this phenomenon?

In this article, we provide an explanation and add to international relations theory by unpacking how the concept of affordances links practices and technology. We focus on diplomacy where the effects of technology have received little attention (but see Bátora 2008; Bjola and Holmes eds. 2015; Branch 2017; Cooper et al. 2013; Duncombe 2017; Hocking and Melissen 2015). Innovations in communication technology from the telegraph to the email have not just accelerated international negotiations; each technological innovation has helped determine what kind of diplomacy can take place. Today, international negotiations are largely a digitally-mediated struggle for semantic control over documents. Yet our theories of international relations have so far largely failed to take the changes in international negotiations due to technology into account. One reason is that our understandings of negotiations still

revolve around the notion of diplomats acting as mediators (Constantinou 2013; Sharp 2009; Der Derian 1987), whereas ICT has removed many barriers of space and time. Another reason is that it is difficult to gain access to the negotiation table unless you are one of the negotiating parties. For this reason, scholars discover certain phenomena only incidentally.

That is exactly what happened to us in the rounds of participant observation we conducted in the diplomatic engine room of the EU, the Council of Ministers. Diplomatic use of email, mobile devices, and word processing software features – e.g. track-changes, tables, or bold text – may seem inconsequential. However, it significantly impacts national positions and the sorts of international compromises that states can reach. It is in the documents' changes, rejections and acceptances, that negotiators enact the politics of international relations. For this reason, “track-change diplomacy” deserves the undivided attention of international relations scholars. By coining the term track-change diplomacy we do not claim to have discovered a radically new process unique to the digital age. Diplomacy has, for a long time, involved collective text drafting (although we have never known much about the process itself). However, as this article will demonstrate, ICT changes international negotiations in significant ways.

We use the term track-change diplomacy as a heuristic to analyze how ICT (including, but not limited to the track-change function in word processing software) shapes diplomatic negotiations. We will focus on three main affordances of this technology: *shareability*, *Visualization* and *immediacy*. Affordances are the inherent action potentials of a given technology, which its users do not always realize. We argue that the specific technology used to reach diplomatic compromises fundamentally informs how drafting and negotiating proceed. Shareability allows for multiple co-authors to work on a document, while visualization means these authors operate within a particular schematized design aesthetic, and the immediacy of high-speed text circulation facilitates back-and-forth editing under continuous time pressure. In large multilateral settings that negotiate on a continuous basis, these three characteristics collectively shape key international relations categories: negotiators define the national interest as textual edits, they reach compromises through aesthetically circumscribed drafting exercises, and power is emergent as the individual negotiator experiences a loss of agency when the text gains a life of its own. In some instances, when diplomats deal with non-vital national interests, the characteristics of track-change diplomacy can result in diplomats losing control over the negotiation process and even adopting legislation that none of the negotiating parties intended.

We have divided this article into five parts. The first section unfolds how scholars have analyzed international negotiations and the production of texts in diplomacy to date – focusing on cables, reports and speeches – rather than internationally negotiated texts. The second section outlines how international relations scholarship has drawn on Science and Technology Studies (STS) and Actor Network Theory (ANT), but still lacks a language to properly unpack how diplomats use technology in practice. The third section develops the concept of technological *affordance* as something that both enables and constrains the tasks that users can possibly perform. The fourth section presents our ethnography, integrating participant observation, confidential documents and interviews. In the final section, we demonstrate the value of our affordance approach to technology through an in-depth analysis of everyday negotiations in the EU. We conclude by outlining a research agenda on technology-in-practice, enabling international relations theory to better address how technologies from artificial intelligence to social media affect international relations.

Diplomacy and the drafting of documents in international negotiations

The very nature of track-change diplomacy explains why states can lose oversight, and how the process of negotiation tends to gain a life of its own. The Lisbon Treaty (2009) is a case in point. This treaty, which revised the institutional setting of the EU, includes several provisions that none of the member states cared for. For example, the Treaty's infamous article 50, the so-called 'divorce clause' that the British government activated to begin Brexit, the UK's exit from the EU, has a complex negotiation history, which its authors do not fully recollect, nor agree upon. According to Lord Kerr, former chief British diplomat, the article was not directed at democratic member states, but would be triggered in the case of a dictatorship (de Wit 2016). Other members of the Convention on the Future of Europe, including former Member of the European Parliament, Andrew Duff, remember that the motivation behind article 50 was purely symbolic, and that the article was never meant to be used at all (Duff 2016). Such puzzling situations, where states agree upon negotiation outcomes that they did not really intend, calls for an inside view into the diplomatic engine room.

The study of international negotiations presents numerous challenges. Even a relatively open multilateral body, such as the EU, is secretive when it comes to the performance and defense of national interests. Consequently, scholars and journalists rely on the outcome of

meetings in the form of official end documents, formal negotiation rules and distribution of votes, or draw on interviews with negotiators. These sorts of ‘outsiders’ have difficulties asking questions about phenomena they do not know the existence of, or which they may consider irrelevant from the outset, while diplomats might not be fully aware of all the elements that shape their negotiations. Only a few scholars have had the opportunity to actually observe confidential multilateral negotiations. To the limited extent that international relations, diplomatic and practice-oriented scholars have analyzed text production in diplomacy, they have primarily focused on communication within a national foreign service – cables, notes, strategy papers – or public texts. Drawing on participant observation in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iver B. Neumann has argued that diplomatic documents such as speeches are about the production of texts that “the entire ministry may stand behind” (2012, 81; see also Neumann 2007) rather than attempts to produce or communicate new policies (see also Cornut 2015).

Despite the valuable insights yielded by international relations theory and specifically practice-oriented scholarship on diplomatic text production such as the importance of “pen-holding” in the UN Security Council (Ross 2007; Farrall and Prantl 2016; Pouliot 2016a) or “audit culture” (Kuus 2016), it has, so far, failed to consider the tools used when producing text, or the way in which technology contributes to representing national interests. Practice-oriented scholars have analysed text drafting as reflecting social dynamics in the negotiation, such as a “struggle over competence” (Adler-Nissen and Pouliot 2014) or “collective consciousness” (Ralph and Gifkins 2017), but have not addressed how text drafting co-constitutes social dynamics. They have shown that diplomats conceive and handle multilateral agreements – whether declarations or international law – from the very beginning as documents with shared authorship.¹ As Vincent Pouliot puts it, “[the] skillful practice of multilateral negotiation is – literally – a collective accomplishment” (2016a, 16). Yet, this collective accomplishment, as we will show, is not just due to socialization among permanent representatives, the use of particular software and technology also makes compromises possible. Even critical scholars, while attending closely to “narratives of production” – for example the drafting of UN resolutions (Shepherd 2008) – say little about the work of construction itself. Izadora Do Monte mentions

¹ Pouliot (2011) and Adler-Nissen (2014) describe how national diplomats rather than defending national interests in terms of substantive ‘win-sets’ (Putnam 1988), translate opposing demands between their home and the multilateral UN context they negotiate in.

in passing that UN Security Council discussions are “organized through electronic mail and ruled by informal but well-established conventions. The outcome of these discussions, either simply resolved by email exchanges or after a real live discussion, is a resolution” (2016, 674). In sum, while international relations scholars generally acknowledge that “diplomacy has been influenced by the development of available means of communication and transportation” (Jönsson and Hall 2005, 90) they yet have to integrate this observation when studying diplomacy.

Beyond international relations theory, there is a large body of literature on the production of documents and their role within organizations and bureaucracies (for an overview, see Freeman and Maybin 2011). But researchers have rarely established connection between these studies and diplomatic scholarship (for an exception, see Dittmer 2016). Within anthropology and sociology, scholars such as Latour (2005) and Hull (2012) highlight how everyday practices in producing documents – and the material qualities of the text themselves – have tangible social effects. The invention of the printing press was critical to the emergence of modern science, just as particular material properties of documents have enabled governments to act over time and space (Latour 1986). Sociologist Richard Harper (1998) has demonstrated by tracing “document careers” in the International Monetary Fund (IMF), it is possible to discern how an organization is structured. Indeed, by studying the circulation and materiality of documents such as paper quality, stamps, and letterheads, as well as the aesthetics of textual features – “paragraphs, tables, subtitles, fonts, margins, and bullets” (Hull 2012, 255) – we can uncover how bureaucracies function.

Annelise Riles (1998; 1999) comes closest to capturing the nature of international negotiations of text in her fascinating participant observations of the UN. As she shows, delegations place their suggestions to a given text in brackets. The aesthetics of creating a bracket-free ‘clean’ text, rather than having the text convey a particular meaning, becomes the primary logic that shapes the negotiation process. Negotiators dismiss some versions of bracketed text, while they consolidate others. Riles’ anthropology offers crucial insight into everyday diplomatic document drafting, including what scholars often overlook, but which is omnipresent in multilateral negotiation: *aesthetics*. However, we still lack knowledge about how diplomats use ICT during negotiations, how it shapes expectations and the implications for international relations categories such as national interests, compromises and power. Our

analysis points towards not only the dynamics of face-to-face meetings (Holmes 2013), but also the affordances of technology that help shape these negotiations.

Technology and practice in international relations theory

In international relations theory, focusing on idealizations of technology, rather than on technology in practice, can easily distort our understanding of technology. In recent years, however, concepts from Science and Technology Studies (STS) and the sub-field of Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) have gained popularity among international relations scholars in a bid to bring technology deeper into our understanding of world politics. As an interdisciplinary research field, STS is interested in the social constitution of science and technology, and, in turn, how science and technology have constitutive effects on society (Jacobsen 2015).

International relations scholars drawing on STS and ANT aim to show how technologies facilitate different modes of international politics. In a study of the materials of diplomatic practice, Pouliot observes that technology (such as nuclear warheads) may even make people “do things they would not have done otherwise” (2010, 294). Despite this understanding, we still lack a precise explanation of what precipitates this action. Concepts such as *assemblage*, *actant* and *inscription* are particularly relevant for our research aim, but, as we will argue in this section, a theoretical language to unpack how users enact technology in practice is still underdeveloped.

The concept of *assemblage* is based on the idea that humans, animals and things dynamically relate to each other in heterogeneous groups, from which productive outcomes emerge beyond the individual (Deleuze and Guattari 1987).² Conceptually speaking, this means that international organizations, diplomats or foreign ministries are not taken-for-granted entities, but rather traceable physical and cognitive processes, events, buildings, borders, humans and networks (Dittmer 2016; McConnell and Dittmer 2018; Hoijtink 2017; Lisle 2018). ANT focuses on such assemblages (i.e. Actor Networks). Its founders, Michel Callon, John Law and Bruno Latour, developed the concept of *actant* – a term which asserts the “quasi-agential properties of matter” (Mitchell 2014, 12; Coole 2013; Cudworth and Hobden 2013).

² In his pioneering work on cyberspace, Ronald Deibert was among the first to argue that the “material properties” (Deibert 2003, 504) and “‘biases’ of communication technologies [...] shape and constrain the environment within which communications take place” (Deibert 2003, 503).

Actants may be algorithms (Aradau and Blanke 2017; Amoore and Raley 2017), drones (Leander 2013; Schandorf and Karatzogianni 2018), flags (Bueger 2013) or many other “things” (Salter 2015; Amicelle et al. 2015), and these actants come together to form provisional relations of actor-networks (Law 2008). Actants have agential features in that they are a part of assemblages, where actions are “the emergent product of myriad interacting forces and bodies that collide, respond, react, and counteract one another” (Mitchell 2014, 12; also see Aradau 2010; Balzacq and Dunn Cavelty 2016). Surveillance assemblages, for example, connect technologies such as biometric data collection and body scanners in a way that resembles Foucault’s panopticon (Muller et al. 2016). While generating important insights, this approach does not systematically specify the mechanisms through which technology works and does not bring us much closer to an understanding of how ICT shapes international negotiations.

The concept of *inscriptions* comes closer to addressing our analytical needs by “making distant events and processes visible, mobile and calculable in terms of documents, charts, forms, reports, signs and graphs” (Walters 2002, 84). Inscriptions are the technologies through which actors seek to translate the messiness of the world—in the laboratory, the battlefield or the market—into tangible knowledge that is concrete and visible enough for governing purposes (Aradau and Huysmans 2014). While not an STS scholar and not explicitly making use of the notion of inscription, Branch (2011) studies the role of maps in processes of state formation in exactly this way. He demonstrates that “new mapmaking technologies changed how actors thought about political space, political organization, and political authority” (Branch 2011, 1), subsequently influencing their ideas of accepted governance. In a more recent article, Branch (2017) claims that digital mapping technologies structure territorial negotiations in unanticipated ways, because they visualize territory differently from paper maps. Similarly, while not using the concept of inscription, Der Derian (2003) focus on how technological developments have resulted in new modes of representation in warfare, changing the way soldiers perceive the battlefield and how they act in it accordingly.

These different conceptual answers to the relationship between materiality and the social insist on the co-constitution of technology and practice. Unfortunately, concepts such as *assemblage*, and *actant* lack analytical precision when it comes to identifying the mechanisms of co-constitution. The concept of *inscription*, in turn, is useful, but limits the role of technology to representations of reality. It does not encompass that people can use technology

as tools to physically aid in actions on the material world, thereby changing it (nuclear weapons, for example, are not inscriptions). Moreover, as Nexon and Pouliot (2013) have argued, there is a discrepancy between ANT and international relations theory, in the sense that ANT tends to focus on concrete micro-processes, whereas international relations theories predominantly revolve around macro-processes.

The next sections add to the international relations literature on technology by responding to the challenges of analytical precision and relation to macro-phenomena. We show that affordance is a theoretical concept geared for an analysis of the forms of action that technologies make possible – but also that these affordances shape macro-phenomena such as national interests, negotiations and, ultimately, international governance.

Theorizing technology in practice: An affordance approach

To explore track-change diplomacy and precisely identify how ICT and international practices relate, requires combining insights from STS, organization, media and communication studies as well as practice theory. Specifically, we introduce the notion of *affordance*, understood as possibilities for action – i.e. how an object or technology both enables and constrains the tasks that users can possibly perform with it (Evans et al. 2017, 36).

Cognitive psychologist James J. Gibson developed the notion of affordance in 1977 to explain how people orient themselves to objects in their world in terms of the possibilities these objects afford for action. Donald Norman (1988) popularized affordance in studies of human-machine interaction, documenting examples of “bad design.” Affordances are now key to how social sciences conceptualized technology’s role in society (e.g. Hutchby 2001; Hine 2008). The concept is relational – representing potential interactions between people and technology, rather than being a property of either alone. This relational view also explains why there is no singular theory of affordances, as each emerges based on the technology’s material features and contextual functionality (Evans et al. 2017, 36).

Casting an everyday perspective on technology with our affordance approach, we are inspired by organizational scholars such as Orlikowski who developed the term “technology-in-use” (Orlikowski et al. 1995) to point out that technologies seldom bring predictable effects to social life. Instead, technological artifacts operate within a web of organizational, occupational and institutional forces. A practice perspective on technology accounts for the fact that people,

organizations and states do not always “realize the apparent potential of a technology when they use it” (Majchrzak and Markus 2013, 3), and can sometimes use technology in ways the designers never intended. An affordance approach highlights that technology creates conditions for specific forms of human agency, and thus, contrary to most STS- and ANT-inspired international relations scholarship, we do not see technology as having agency in and of itself.

To understand why different individuals and organizations do different things with the same technology requires understanding how cultures and habits shape our use of technology. At the same time, we cannot reduce the use of technology to human attributes such as culture, norms or habits. We have to understand it in relation to what actions the technology makes possible. The concept of affordance expresses this interrelation between technological functionality and social practice. An affordance approach is agnostic to particular features of a technology and, instead, asks what combination of features enable and constrain the ways people use technology (Zammuto et al. 2007, 752).³

To develop this concept for international relations theory, we focus on three affordances of ICT that we have identified as significant influences in diplomatic negotiations: *shareability*, *visualization* and *immediacy*.

Shareability

The first affordance of ICT is what we refer to as *shareability*. Advances in ICT enable a large number of actors to work on a single (or similar) document across different locations, with several practical implications. Firstly, it can broaden participation in an organization’s decision-making processes by including people who may otherwise be working on the periphery. Virtual collaboration increases the potential for bringing people from different organizations and disciplines together, while documenting their decision rationales and work processes in real time (Zammuto 2007, 756). Secondly, it fosters a sense of collaboration and transparency, as it streamlines the ability to not only share but also integrate others’ knowledge (Zammuto et al. 2007, 755). In international negotiations this translates into connecting capital cities more closely to their diplomats abroad. It also affords a more inclusive, de-centralized organization of foreign policy that incorporates other ministries and parliaments, and potentially even sub-

³ Technology features are the ways “that [a technology’s] physical and/or digital materials are arranged into particular forms that endure across differences in place and time” (Leonardi 2012: 42)

state actors. Enhanced shareability makes rapid feedback possible by enabling quick probes and clarifications from varied sources.

While enhanced shareability affords more input from capitals, in large multilateral settings that negotiate on a daily basis, the massive expansion of individuals involved in diplomatic negotiations is likely to result in the individual negotiator losing control. The lack of centralized procedures coupled with the high speed of back-and-forth negotiations leads to power emerging from the negotiation process, as we will explain further below.

Visualization

The second affordance of ICT is what we call *visualization*. It affords the ability to observe entire work processes in action from end-to-end, represented through language or images that aid our thought processes in important ways. How we visualize certain phenomena affects how we address them. The philosophers and cognitive scientists Clark and Chalmers refer to “active externalism” to highlight how our environment drives cognitive processes (1998, 7). Objects and technologies help us to not only do things differently, but also shape the way we think (Clark and Chalmers 1998, 8). We reduce the computational load of our brain by manipulating external devices and cultural artifacts such as maps and texts to solve convoluted problems. While this sort of visualization is important for cognitive processes on an individual level, it is even more relevant in collective decision-making. Visualization is an important element of communication (Weber 2008). Visualization aids understanding, it helps keeping a “live record” and enables collective sense making as “people figure out how to respond” (Zammuto et al. 2007, 754).

Visualization fundamentally underpins the sorts of solutions that diplomats identify in international conflicts. When diplomats negotiate over territorial disputes, the ways in which they draw up the territory constitutively affects the course of negotiations and the solutions that will emerge (Branch 2012; Branch 2017). Similarly, when diplomats visualize the object of their negotiations in text form, and signify changes to the text with the help of track-changes, bold, or brackets, then they will express the national position in the international dispute in the form of text edits. They seek the solution to a particular dispute with the help of drafting exercises, as opposed to drawing a boundary on a map. In other words, how diplomats visualize

the object of diplomatic negotiation has constitutive effects on how they establish the national position towards the object, and how they identify a compromise.

Immediacy

The third affordance that we wish to highlight is *immediacy*. ICT enables “unprecedented speed of access to materials and world events as they happen” (Conole and Dyke 2004, 116). Despite the wealth of information now within reach, speed can raise issues of quality and imply lacking reflection or critical judgment. The speed with which individuals can now exchange information has also shifted expectations in terms of response times. Organization scholars have shown how this intensifies working patterns, with responses expected almost immediately and an increasing number of back-and-forth edits amongst more authors than in the past (Conole and Dyke 2004, 116). Today diplomats create and recreate documents, and constantly negotiate meanings in rapid feedback circles within the EU.

Communication speed has a phenomenological effect:

[Speed] promotes a more pragmatic, reflexive immediate response to new information, as it is pixilated across our screens. This can be said to be particularly true of email, where nowadays users are bombarded with so much information that there is a tendency to skim read and adopt a surface approach in terms of reacting to responses and requests (Conole and Dyke 2004, 118).

While speed tends to reduce diplomats’ and leaders’ attention span in their everyday activities, they can consciously counteract these tendencies when dealing with issues of vital national interest. Under these circumstances they will undertake their best efforts to remain focused. The literature surrounding cognitive psychology and social practices suggests that when difficulties arise, people will raise their awareness (for an overview see Hopf 2017). In other words, in moments of crisis, deliberate reflection replaces default automaticity (Baumeister and Bargh 2014; Bourdieu 2007).

For this reason, a crucial aspect of the technology-diplomacy interaction is not just how word processing software speeds up the circulation of texts, but also how negotiators handle that speed, how they experience and assess it – and ultimately, how that shapes international relations. For example, the introduction of the telegraph in the 1830s revolutionized diplomacy

(Nickles 2009). The technology obviously made it possible to speed up the transfer of messages, but it did more than that. It provoked counter-moves from diplomats keen to protect their autonomy abroad. It also led foreign ministries to compose more concise messages because telegraph services were expensive, thereby changing the language of diplomacy (Nickles 2009, 3).

We expect that in highly institutionalized multilateral settings where continuous international negotiations take place, the affordance of immediacy will result in shorter attention spans during day-to-day negotiations, unless the organization has a slow moving deliberative culture. By contrast, when one-off negotiations of vital national interest are on the table, participants will do their utmost to increase their attention span and diplomatic focus.

Summing up our theory, in accordance with the affordance approach, we do not make causal claims, but specify conditions of possibility. Thus, we do not predict whether track-change diplomacy will lead to compromise solutions in specific negotiations; the practice does not determine specific outcomes. Diplomats themselves do not know whether their efforts will succeed, but they use track-change diplomacy as their go to approach to solve disputes. Nor do we predict precisely when loss of authorship will occur or when the negotiating parties will agree upon a text that none of them intended. We propose necessary, not sufficient conditions: in large multilateral settings operating under increased time pressure and with a loaded agenda, track-change diplomacy can make smooth negotiations possible, with the side effect that in moments when diplomats lose focus, it can lead to a loss of control. Inversely, when diplomats and leaders have made key national interests explicit, they will do their best to remain focused and retain some measure of control.

Ethnographic methods: participant observation, documents and interviews

This section briefly outlines our ethnographic approach while our appendix provides details on the diplomatic setting, sources, methods, analytical strategy and relevant literature on EU negotiations and ethnography in international relations scholarship. Our technology-in-practice approach implies an inductive methodology. As mentioned in the introduction, observers of diplomacy would not necessarily know about the existence of track-change diplomacy unless they became privy to the practice.

By analyzing how diplomats conduct negotiations in the EU's multi-level system, we focus on the Coreper (Committee of Permanent Representatives): the diplomatic engine room where ambassadors of the EU member states negotiate. Coreper meets in Brussels every week and prepares the Council of Ministers in its various formations. At Coreper, the ambassadors negotiate many of the politically contentious issues that their subordinates cannot solve at working group level. Coreper is not very visible to the general public and operates largely behind the scenes. As such, this forum resolves a significant number of issues on a *de facto* basis during its meetings, although national ministers in the Council are the ones who hold the legislative power (Lewis 2016).

The EU is not a typical international organization, which raises the question of generalizability to other multilateral settings. Yet, in aspects pertaining to track-change diplomacy, the EU does not substantially differ from other multilateral organizations. First, while Coreper interacts frequently thereby affecting the mechanics of track-change diplomacy, equivalent bodies in the UN or NATO also meet regularly (Pouliot 2016b). Second, the EU has substantive areas in which it does not take decisions unanimously, but by Qualified Majority Voting, which may affect the speed of negotiations and make them even faster. However, in substance we can observe the same mechanisms in areas where the EU takes decisions by unanimity – even during major treaty revisions such as the Lisbon Treaty for example (Interview 21.11.2014; Interview 12.12.2014). Third, the binding status of EU legislation and the extensive powers of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) might influence the mechanics of track-change diplomacy. But again, we have identified the same mechanisms in areas in which the ECJ does not have any jurisdiction, and in non-legally binding documents. Lastly, one might argue that the EU is a special case because of the high degree of trust between frequently interacting parties. While EU negotiators do not distrust each other to the extent that warring parties do, the EU's working environment certainly contends with the same interpersonal tensions as we expect in other large organizations.

In fact, we find similar patterns of track-change diplomacy identified in the EU in other multilateral organizations such as the UN (Riles 1998), UNESCO (Schaefer 2017) and NATO. Also more hybrid multilateral institutional environments, such as the Contact Group on Piracy (Bueger 2017) exhibit similar dynamics. While diplomats also use track-changes when drafting bilateral agreements, we do not expect bilateral diplomacy to have the exact same characteristics. We can attribute these differences to norms and habits typically found in

legalized, multilateral organizations with many countries involved, compared to the less institutionalized practices of bilateral diplomacy (Pouliot 2011). The number of actors involved in the negotiation process also makes a difference. Moreover, we cannot expect the same track-change dynamics when states' vital national interests are at stake or when they are deliberately seeking to delay agreements.

We gathered most of the empirical material during two-and-a-half months of participant observation in the permanent representation of an EU member state and in the Council of Ministers in Brussels in 2014. During this period, one of the authors attended Coreper meetings. She also attended numerous working group meetings and Council meetings, as well as the consultations prior to Council and Coreper meetings between Ministers and the ambassador, and between attachés and the ambassador. The other author worked in the Department of European Policy of a member state's Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a year (2010-2011) where she helped prepare European Council and Council of Ministers meetings and participated in drafting instructions, while attending various meetings in Brussels.

The participant observations inform the core of the analysis. In addition, we analyzed 266 internal documents that were circulated in preparation for Coreper meetings during the two-and-a-half month period. These documents consist primarily of draft legislation with suggested text edits, presidency compromise solutions to outstanding issues of negotiations, instructions from a member state, and diplomats' summaries of negotiations.

We supplemented the participant observations with insights from numerous open-ended interviews both authors conducted during the period 2007-2018 with among others active and former Coreper ambassadors, Council secretariat officials, Members of the European Parliament, and employees of the Commission. The interviews served to clarify observed incidents. We have anonymized informants (and most country names) to respect their confidentiality and protect informants' identities.

The participant observations provide exceptional insights to the day-to-day proceedings of negotiations, but also have certain limitations. First, due to the limited time we were allowed to spend in the Permanent Representation and the Council, it was impossible to follow one piece of legislation through from inception by the Commission to its final adoption by the Council and the European Parliament. To be able to analyze the entire negotiation process, we therefore had to rely on different pieces of legislation in their respective stages. Second, conducting

participant observation also meant that we could not select the dossier (i.e. a particular negotiated text) on the basis of pre-defined criteria. Instead, we studied dossiers as they unfolded in front of our eyes, without knowing how they would develop. So, rather than concentrating the analysis on one piece of legislation, we highlight more general patterns of negotiations as we observed them across different cases. This aligns with the inductive method of “practice tracing,” that seeks to “map the ways of doing things that [...] characterize a given social configuration” (Pouliot 2014, 273) and then analytically generate broader patterns from these concrete observations.

Track-change diplomacy in the EU

From delivering post by wagon to today’s word processing software, the nature of diplomacy has advanced alongside ICT. As the French historian Fernand Braudel (1995[1966]) explains, in the 16th century, the “[s]tatesmen and ambassadors, whom we usually imagine with weighty matters on their minds, are often preoccupied by the arrival or delays of the mail” (Braudel, quoted in Fletcher 2015, 114). Uncertainty about not just when, but if letters and documents would ever reach the envoy hindered international negotiations. The horse carriage, the improvement of road and rail traffic led to incremental improvements in communications, but prior to the late 19th century, limited communication was still a major obstacle to diplomacy (Black 2010; 49). As late as 1980s, junior diplomats from EU member states were sitting up all night at the embassy in Brussels where the one computer dedicated to receive confidential material was located. They waited for draft conclusions, then photocopied them and slid them under the hotel room door of the members of the national delegation at 4am (Interview 18.04.2018).

Some characteristics that defined negotiations in Coreper in 1958, when it was established, are equally important today. Notably, negotiations center on textual edits. This is not surprising given that many of the word processing features used today “build historically on aesthetics, discourse genres, means of distribution, concepts of authorship and ownership, etc., that were developed through the media of paper” (Hull 2012, 261). In other words, the affordances of Visualization on paper and word processing features are quite similar, meaning that they affect diplomatic negotiations in similar, albeit non-identical ways.

By contrast, advancements in ICT have considerably impacted on the affordances of immediacy and shareability. As one senior diplomat recalls,

Without thinking, we have just increased the speed and complexity. We handle dossiers just as fast as we did when we were 15 [member states] as we do when we are 28 countries around the table. Basically, enlargement [in 2004, the EU grew from 15 to 25 with the Central and Eastern European countries] wouldn't have been possible without email, mobile phones and software (Interview 18.04.2018).

Track-change diplomacy as the combination of advanced ICT and diplomatic practices has three defining characteristics: shared authorship which involves including many people from geographically dispersed regions and institutions, a particular aesthetic centering on textual edits with the help of word processing features and a high speed of negotiations and textual circulation. This section will show how in multilateral settings that negotiate on a continuous basis, these three characteristics collectively shape key international relations categories: negotiators define the national interest as textual edits in a compressed two-level game (Putnam 1988), they reach compromises through aesthetically circumscribed drafting exercises, and power is emergent. In some instances, when non-vital national interests are involved, the characteristics of track-change diplomacy can result in diplomats losing control over the negotiation process and even adopting legislation that none of the negotiating parties intended.

Shareability: From shared authorship to loss of authorship in drafting EU legislation

The first characteristic of track-change diplomacy is shareability, given the large number of actors who work on a single document across different locations. When one follows the circulation of a draft for an ordinary legislative act through the EU, it is clear that massive coordination efforts are required for reaching a compromise, which track-change technology makes possible.

The European Commission initiates a text with the involvement of several Directorate Generals (DGs) and consultations with member states and stakeholders. The text then goes to the Council of Ministers, where it passes through various working groups. The member state representatives as part of these working groups can receive instructions from multiple domestic ministries, and potentially their national parliaments. The text will then go to the Coreper

ambassador meeting before the Council of Ministers decides on it. Various political parties negotiate over the text in the European Parliament, and the EU has only adopted the legal document once the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers have reached an agreement (for more detail see the methodological appendix).

This brief elaboration highlights the many different hands through which the text circulates. As one diplomat explains:

There is not one author. It is a collective enterprise. Many people are involved. Many institutions are involved. It is the machine of searching for a compromise, which writes the text (Interview, 20.11.2014).

Beyond the technology of track-changes, social norms guide the changes that individuals are allowed to make, so that reaching a compromise between so many actors becomes possible. For example, member states have to show flexibility wherever they can. They have also learned to aggregate positions. To get edits approved, others need to support one's position. Aggregation is crucial to make the interactions between 28 member states, the various national ministries, and the EU institutions more meaningful.

One of the consequences of shareability as an affordance for international diplomacy is that capital cities can potentially better oversee the negotiations:

I remember, previously, you said: 'Okay, I take this one,' and then I had to defend the choice at home, but today you say, 'give me five minutes, and I've spoken to my Prime Minister.' The autonomy of Coreper ambassadors is gone (Interview 15.04.2018).

However, the implications of shareability are not as straightforward. The fact that track-change diplomacy allows the text to circulate through so many different iterations, creates a situation of shared authorship that can occasionally result in a loss of authorship. As a Member of the European Parliament explains: "so many people are involved, you cannot foresee what the outcome [...] is going to be," (Interview, 20.11.2014). Contrary to what we commonly believe – that writing is a case of "highly controlled sign usage" (Hirschauer 2016, 55, authors' translation) – the intricate circulation process that negotiation documents go through means that diplomats can, at times, lose control over the production of those signs. While bureaucracies are generally able to expose a similar phenomenon of loss of authorship resulting from a specific

bureaucratic culture (as per Weber), observing it in diplomatic negotiations, where diplomats are supposed to represent the interests of states as independent actors, is considerably more fascinating, as it opposes the dominant understanding of what diplomacy is all about.

Visualization: Using word processing software to reach agreements

The second characteristic of track-change diplomacy relates to the affordance of Visualization. In the EU, negotiations are extremely aesthetic and text-oriented. Diplomats use various Microsoft Word functions to highlight proposed text edits and bring out the different positions of the negotiators. Each of these functions fulfils the role of making changes more visible and therefore allowing diplomats to negotiate around those changes. For example, the table with four columns (see Figure 1) is a typical stylistic device used during *trialogues*.⁴ The table permits three institutions – the Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council – to add their amendments to individual paragraphs side by side. This makes it easy for a reader to identify and compare them, while the fourth column is left for the compromise solution. The table works well for three negotiating parties, but it would be significantly more challenging to

⁴ Trialogues refer to negotiations between the European Commission, the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, and the Rapporteur of the European Parliament.

use for all 28 member states. Tools with different affordances for Visualizing text edits, such as the track-change function, are more useful under these circumstances.

Figure 1: Example of table used at trialogue negotiations.

In terms of formatting, Presidency suggestions for a compromise text at Coreper ambassadorial meetings usually have “new text in **Bold and underlined**. Deleted text is in

Commission proposal	EP amendments	Council position	Presidency suggestions
Amendment 18			
Article 1 – point 1 - (Article 2 – subparagraph 1 – indent 15)			
- ‘hybrid propulsion vehicle’ means a vehicle within the meaning of Directive 2007/46/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 September 2007 establishing a framework for the approval of motor vehicles and their trailers, and of systems, components and separate technical units intended for such vehicles, equipped with one or more traction motor(s) operated by electric power and not permanently connected to the grid and one or more traction motor(s) operated by internal combustion;	– ‘ <i>low carbon technology</i> ’ means <i>technology which does not fully rely on fossil oil sources in the energy supply to transport and which significantly contribute to the decarbonisation of transport. The sources include:</i>	– ‘ <u>alternative fuels</u> ’ shall mean <u>fuels or power sources which serve, at least partly, as a substitute for fossil oil sources in the energy supply to transport and which have the potential to contribute to its decarbonisation and enhance the environmental performance of the transport sector. They consist of:</u>	Same objective as the EP. Keep Council's text.
	– <i>electricity</i>	– <u>electricity consumed in all types</u> of electric vehicles,	Same objective as the EP. Keep Council's text.
	– <i>hydrogen</i>	– <u>hydrogen,</u>	
	– <i>synthetic fuels</i>		These fuels do not need extra weight.
	– <i>advanced Biofuels,</i>		These fuels do not need extra weight.
	– <i>natural gas, including biomethane, in gaseous form (compressed natural gas – CNG) and liquefied form (liquefied natural gas – LNG), and</i>	– <u>natural gas, including biomethane, in gaseous form (Compressed Natural Gas – CNG) and liquefied form (Liquefied Natural Gas – LNG),</u>	

Strikethrough,” (Legislative proposal by a member state, 11.11.2014). Changes the Council Legal Service proposed for legal accuracy are **Bold and double underlined** and ~~Double strikethrough~~. Grey shading serves to highlight politically contentious issues. Alternatively, diplomats can use **red font**. [Square brackets] indicate that the negotiators have not yet agreed on something. Footnotes commonly serve to write down the delegations’ suggestions for modifications to the text, or to highlight delegations’ scrutiny and parliamentary reservations. Occasionally, they use the comments function.

All of these tools are visual markers that allow the delegations to focus on specific passages of the text, while letting the rest fade into the background. The comparison between new and old text becomes easily discernible. These tools help to increase the speed of textual revisions, but they also draw out certain passages from the document’s overall context. As a result,

diplomats can easily focus on the details of particular wordings, over which they then negotiate out of context. They can lose the overview of the entire text and therefore lose sight of the actual subject of their negotiations, contributing to a loss of authorship.

Article 2

Definitions

1. For the purposes of this Regulation, the following definitions shall apply:

Definitions related to devices:

- (1) 'medical device' means any ...

.....
The implantable or other invasive products, **intended to be used for human beings, or products ~~for intended to delivering significant amounts and/or intensities of energy~~ onto or into the human body, intended to be used for human beings,** which are listed in Annex XV shall be considered medical devices, regardless of ~~whether or not~~ they are intended by the manufacturer to be used for a medical purpose. **However, this Regulation shall only apply to a product in Annex XV following the adoption of relevant common specifications pursuant to Article 7⁴ for that product.**

2. The Commission shall be empowered to adopt delegated acts in accordance with Article 89 to amend the list in Annex XV referred to in the last subparagraph of number (1) of paragraph 1, in the light of technical progress, **in order to protect the health and safety of patients, users or other persons or other aspects of public health,** and taking into account the similarity between a medical device and a product without a medical purpose in respect of their characteristics and risks.

CHAPTER I
GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1

Subject matter

This Regulation lays down rules ~~on the design and construction of cableway installations designed to transport persons and~~ on the making available on the market and the free movement of subsystems and safety components for ~~such~~ cableway installations. It also contains rules on the design, construction and entry into service of new cableway installations.

Article 2

Scope

- (1) This Regulation shall apply to new cableway installations designed to transport persons, to modifications of cableway installations requiring a new authorisation, and to subsystems and safety components for such installations.
- (2) This Regulation shall not apply to the following:
 - (a) lifts within the meaning of Directive ~~95/16/EC~~ 2014/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council⁸ on lifts;

Figure 2: Examples of Presidency suggestions for a compromise text.

14. Responsibility for the control and surveillance of the **external borders** lies with the Member States which, in performing this function, are also acting in the common interest of all Member States. In order to ensure that Europe's external borders are effectively managed and that the same standards apply everywhere, all relevant instruments must be used in an optimal manner and be adapted where necessary. The European Border Surveillance System will be further developed as a matter of priority in order to become operational by 2013 and allow Member States' authorities carrying out border surveillance activities to share operational information and improve cooperation.

15. These efforts will also be strengthened by pushing forward rapidly with work on "smart borders", to ensure that new technologies are harnessed to meet the challenges of border control. In particular, an entry/exit system and a registered travellers' programme could be introduced. Before creating new systems, however, an evaluation of existing systems should be made and the difficulties encountered when they were set up should be taken into account. The European Council welcomes the agreement reached on the agency for the operational management of large- scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice.

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Figure 3: Example of a track-changed document.

Before text edits reach a point where the Presidency consolidates them into a single set of proposed revisions, national delegations use track-changes to make their suggestions to the text. Compared to the use of bold and underlined formatting, track-changes lead to the propositions' lower degree of authority, as the delete option is already an integral command function. At the same time, the suggestive nature of track-changes inspires to create new text. Using track-changes allows readers to track multiple authors, which is unnecessary in the case of one set of changes the Presidency has consolidated. Although technically possible, this tracing of authorship becomes impractical when many individuals negotiate over a text.

Immediacy: The speed of text circulation through the EU apparatus

ICT permits a third characteristic of track-change diplomacy: immediacy. To an outsider, the EU might appear to be a slow-moving bureaucracy; but for the people involved in the internal negotiations, they occur at a very high speed. The fast circulation of text among many actors that advancements in ICT make possible, also generates expectations of fast responses. Being constantly bombarded with emails can be quite stressful: "If you haven't been up during the night to go to the toilet [and check your mobile phone], then people cannot understand why you haven't answered" (Interview 18.04.2018).

As one senior diplomat notes:

Things need to be very swift, because we are working up against a deadline, so it's seen as good service by the Presidency to send an email and say: 'Here is the document,' and they will often send it out at 4pm in the afternoon for a meeting at 10 or 11am the next day. This wasn't the way we operated previously. Before mobile phones, there was a compromise text and then you would have one or two days to react. Time has become compressed. Sometimes I receive a new text in the rotating door into *Lipsius* [the Council of Ministers building in Brussels] on the way into the meeting (Interview 18.04.2018).

The high speed may, in part, be self-perpetuating with the urge to respond quickly emerging from shared experiences of rapid text circulation. But it is also due to a more or less implicit norm of measuring success on the basis of how many texts diplomats have approved. To reach a speedy agreement and get legislation through the apparatus might be one of the most crucial objectives underlying the negotiation process today.

ICT in tandem with individual role perceptions support fast negotiations. Given Coreper's substantial agenda and the fact that there are 28 member states around the table, the ambassadors are not allowed to speak for more than three minutes per item. They often make explicit that they comply with these rules or apologies if they do not: "Sorry I took up a lot of time there, but I think it was important," (Coreper 1, 18.2.2015). The silent procedure also enhances the speed of negotiations. It implies that Coreper has adopted a proposal, unless a member state objects within one of the deadlines specified by the Presidency (General Secretariat of the Council of the EU 2011, 56). Furthermore, "agreed language" expedites searching for compromises. Agreed language refers to formulations that diplomats have agreed upon in previously approved texts. Diplomats copy-paste these directly into new texts that address similar issues. The purpose is to save time and to avoid replicating the same complex procedures of searching for a compromise. One possible danger of this procedure is that the insertion of agreed language passages into a slightly different context may create new, unintended meanings.

The three affordances of ICT – *shareability*, *Visualization* and *immediacy* – fundamentally shape how negotiators define national interests, how they reach compromises, and what constitutes power in large multilateral settings.

Defining the national interest as text edits

One of the key questions in diplomacy is how the national interest gets represented and performed. Concretely, national capitals write the national interest in their instructions to the EU delegations. Yet, as we will show in this section, the way in which capitals produce these instructions makes it clear that EU negotiations do not center around pre-defined interests, but rather around the performance of interests expressed through text revisions using a particular software that also shapes the way diplomats conduct these edits. In short, the text helps produce national interests – just as much as the national interests are manifest in the text. The somewhat emblematic national interest emerges out of the negotiation process, based on the three affordances we have identified.

The high speed of ICT means that email and mobile devices afford almost complete flexibility in terms of being able to constantly edit the text. Previously, the capital sent instructions to the embassy (since instructions represent the government's view), but in practice

it was often the representative in the mission abroad who wrote a first draft the capital then approved. These days, this has taken a radical turn with instructions sometimes drafted at the same time as negotiations take place. A diplomat highlights: “We work a lot with the instructions. It may as well go back and forth a number of times” (Interview, 20.04.2015).

The affordance of shareability, together with the imperative of high-speed, circumscribe the national interest. The Presidency needs to aggregate national positions between multiple delegations, and there are unwritten rules on how many edits (i.e. track-changes) one country is allowed to make. As one senior diplomat in the Council secretariat explains:

It happens regularly that a country uses too many track-changes and then it has no impact. We simply ignore it. We can't take that seriously. We cannot take that much from one single delegation. The delegation must find out what's most important (Interview 15.04.2018).

The affordance of ICT Visualization shapes the aesthetic form that a national interest takes. A discussion during the negotiations of the Single European Sky 2+ (SES 2+) legislation, which regulates EU airspace, illustrates how the aesthetics afforded by Microsoft Word enact the national interest. To understand this negotiation context, it is important to know that Spain and the United Kingdom's ongoing sovereignty dispute over Gibraltar complicated the SES 2+ negotiations. Both parties disagreed about whether to include Gibraltar airport in the legislation. The ambassadors at Coreper could not find a solution to this key issue concerning national sovereignty, so they left the topic for the Transport Council on the 3 December 2014. The UK expressed its national position in the form that it “will only accept a general approach if it is absolutely clear that Gibraltar will be included, without footnotes in 5 and 2.” For Spain, the national position was to include a text in the SES 2+ legislation, which recommended “temporally [to suspend] the application to this airport until an agreement has been reached between Spain and the UK.” To move the legislation forward, the Presidency proposed to:

[...] put paragraph 5 in square brackets, and include a footnote stating ‘the issue as to how in the text to reflect Gibraltar will depend on the results of talks between the UK and Spain.’ The other two footnotes will be deleted, and I hope that this will be a neutral solution. [...] There are precedents for this type of solution. The proposal that we are making is that we would have a general approach, paragraph 5 in square brackets, with a footnote.

Spain responded:

The solution is neutral, so we are able to approve the solution. We still stick to our solution, but with a view to reaching an agreement we can accept that solution.

To the surprise of those present, the British Minister refused the proposal on the grounds that it “is not a neutral approach.” Given that the remaining interested parties thought it was a neutral solution, the Presidency had the member states vote on the general approach with the compromise solution, although it concerned an issue of vital national interest. The UK voted against it, but the general approach passed because it was in a policy area of Qualified Majority Voting. This illustrates that when vital national interests are involved, the parties do their utmost to retain control.

The reaching of compromises through drafting exercises: Getting to the clean text

As indicated in the example above, negotiations take place through text edits, and the EU has developed a real skill of reaching compromise solutions through “drafting exercises” – a process where diplomats draft and redraft texts until they have identified an agreeable solution in the wording of a text. The speed and aesthetic affordances of ICT are crucial for the practices through which negotiators seek compromises in large multilateral settings.

One strategy of collective drafting, for which the affordances of shareability and immediacy are key, is to split the text into pieces that negotiators then circulate in parallel with the more official negotiation process. Whereas they circulate the official documents in full length with track-changes, the use of mobile devices encourages small snippets and fragments of text to circulate at the same time, as member states cut and paste their way to compromise. As one ambassador explains:

We had an Eastern Partnership summit where we needed to refer to language on ‘European aspirations for Ukraine.’ The working group had negotiated long and hard and couldn’t get any further. At the one end, you had [Member State 1] blocking. They could not accept any recognition, any aspirations for Ukraine whatsoever. On the other end you had [Member State 2] and some of the other [States], [Member State 3] and [Member State 4] that couldn’t get enough. I

was tasked by the Presidency to find a compromise. So between two Coreper meetings, I worked with the External Service. First, I called my colleague from [Member State 2]. Then I sent a text to my [Member State 1] colleague, and we pushed it back and forth over the phone. And then they started to see themselves in the text. And then at Coreper, the compromise was presented orally... (Interview 15.04.2018).

These are the hidden layers of negotiations that ICT makes possible.

The Visualization of ICT also shapes how negotiators work with textual edits, and how they reach compromises. In the negotiations concerning Council Conclusions for an Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council for instance, how to treat e-books and regular books became a contentious issue between Northern and Southern states. The text the Presidency initially proposed explicitly referenced the differences in VAT applied to regular books and e-books. However, Northern states argued that VAT does not lie within the competency of the Council for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport, but in that of the Economic and Financial Council. For this reason, they wanted to omit the statement. Given this resistance, the Presidency changed the text to:

promote reading as a tool to spread knowledge, enhance creativity, support access to culture, cultural diversity,[...] develop awareness of a European identity **and to support the application** to e-books **of** the same treatment applied to printed books⁵ (diplomatic notes).⁶

Several member states still opposed this text, so the Presidency made further changes:

promote reading as a tool to spread knowledge, enhance creativity, support access to culture, cultural diversity, [...] develop awareness of a European identity and to **consider to apply** ~~support the application~~ to e-books ~~of~~ the same treatment applied to printed books (ibid.).

The like-minded states that disagreed with this proposal developed their own compromise text, which read:

⁵ New proposal from the Presidency.

⁶ We copied the quotes' formatting from the original internal documents in which they appeared.

promote reading, **through printed books as well as e-books**, as a tool to spread knowledge, enhance creativity, support access to culture, **and** cultural diversity, [...] ~~develop awareness of a European identity and to support the application to e-books of the same treatment applied to printed books~~ (ibid.).

As this text was not satisfying the Southern states, one state suggested another alternative wording:

promote reading as a tool to spread knowledge, enhance creativity, support access to culture, cultural diversity, [...] develop awareness of a European identity, ~~and to apply support the application~~ also applying to e-books ~~of the same treatment applied to printed books~~, **except where different treatment results from EU-law** (ibid.).

But this wording was unacceptable to both groups, so the ambassadors at Coreper were unable to agree and left the issue for the Council of Ministers. The final compromise text in the Conclusions on a Work Plan for Culture (2015-2018) reads:

promote reading as a tool to spread knowledge, enhance creativity, support access to culture and cultural diversity and develop awareness of a European identity, taking into account the various conditions applied to e-books and physical books.

The shareability, visualization and immediacy of ICT allow many actors to negotiate at high speed around textual edits. It also means that the substance of the negotiations can occasionally fade from view in a quest to get the wording right, and with a focus on only the contentious textual passages, not the full document. During negotiations, the text acquires a particular meaning. Thus, in the example above, the claim that “equal treatment of e-books and regular books” refers to an equal VAT is not apparent from the language itself; it only emerged in relation to the different positions at the negotiation table.

Once the text is enshrined in law, it often acquires a new meaning that is in line with the practices of legal interpretation. This legal meaning can be quite different from the meaning that emerged during negotiations or that the diplomats who wrote the text intended.⁷

⁷ Occasionally negotiators can deliberately leave text unclear, knowing that they are unable to solve disagreements – in tune with Kissinger’s understanding of constructive ambiguity (Jegen and Mérand 2004). However, at other times, the process can be automatic and unintentional.

In a dispute between the Council Legal Service and member states over the meaning of a clause in the EU's Lisbon treaty, the Council Legal Service responded in an informal meeting (19.11.2014):

Send us legal arguments about this, not political ones. Usually we stop at the letter of the treaty. I understand that you are not satisfied with it at all. [...] We cannot rely too much on the history of treaty making, on the *travaux préparatoires* to the treaty, we have to find the arguments in the law as is.

Clearly, the text has gained a life of its own.

Emergent power in track-change diplomacy

One of the benefits of an affordance approach to technology is that it overrules the idea that technology has any automatic consequences, thereby allowing for human agency. Human agency does not disappear with technology; what a given technology and established societal practices offer shape its expression. Within international relations theory, scholars often see agency as an exclusive prerogative of the human domain involving intention and freedom of will – which is particularly evident in international negotiation studies (see Braun et al. 2018). A range of perspectives, from post-structuralism, over ANT to practice scholarship have criticized this assumption of conscious agency. For instance, practice scholars promote a logic of practice over a logic of consequences or appropriateness. This explains why Pouliot can quote a UN diplomat as saying: “Diplomatic issues are not resolved through the quality of arguments, but thanks to a capacity to imagine steps that people can engage in [and to find] the next step to rally people to move forward” (Pouliot 2016a, 16).

However, this narrative still allocates agency and power with human agency and creativity. Our analysis of track-change diplomacy shows that multilateral negotiations are more radical. Writing diplomatic text cannot be reduced to human agency (i.e. moves of diplomats alone), but is shaped by technological affordances that significantly impact how diplomats think and handle text as a collective networked exercise. As we have demonstrated, the negotiation process itself takes an emergent character as ambassadors continuously circulate and edit text, while they experience being stripped of the agency they once had.

What we suggest here is that if it is not merely the meeting of different national interests, diplomats represent around a negotiation table, that produces the text, then track-

change diplomacy enables power to work in a different way. Being influential as a diplomat entails being able to use technology effectively. This means being able to edit text and time interventions at a high speed. Of course, the size of member states will influence their ability to get edits approved, because individual voting weights in the Council determine a certain hierarchy and social pressures associated with that hierarchy (Pouliot 2016b; Towns and Rumelili 2017).

It is clear that a small country cannot take the floor as the first [member state] each time. It would be totally out of place [...] It would also be noticed if we always have to say something to all agenda points (Interview 07.01.2015).

Ultimately, however, the most crucial diplomatic skill in terms of enhancing a state's negotiating position is the ability to maneuver one's edits through a complicated negotiation process. In this sense, the text becomes the object over which diplomats hold the negotiations. Power gets expressed both in the process of drafting and through the clean text as a collective achievement.

The barometer of power (invisible to outsiders, and often to participants in the process) is whether a country's most important text edits make it into the final version. Linguistic skills are important. Negotiators who can achieve balanced wording and possess a certain institutional memory to recall previously "agreed language" that they can reapply to new circumstances, are the most likely to embed their preferred solutions in the final document. As a senior diplomat in the Council Secretariat explains:

If you are a competent negotiator, you are able to propose something that can easily slide into a text. You need to be textually economical with suggestions for changes. I remember [Member State X's] ambassador [...] suggested to the Prime Minister to put a comma in the text. We got the comma and it changed the meaning completely and it meant that the Commission couldn't use the proposal for what they had planned to use it. Sometimes a surgical, technical and economical edit has a better chance than a complicated suggestion. Also because the latter can raise all kinds of questions from the others about what this means. Drafting skills are crucial for how lucky you are to get your proposals through (Interview 15.04.2018).

Developing a strategy to subtly navigate one's way through the different iterations of the text is important. As Riles (1999; 2006) points out, agency or politics do not disappear; rather they emerge in the ways in which diplomats manage amendments and procedures. Diplomats have to strategize their edits and interventions, based on the affordances particular technologies offer. Coalitions and negotiations occur so fast that a parallel conversation to the one at the negotiation table happens on the diplomats' mobile phones and along the outskirts of the room. Diplomats send each other comments about how the meeting is developing, and they strategize about who should speak first. Being able to integrate the same textual revisions in the various fora through which the text circulates – and to make sure that one's voice is heard and understood – also matters. At times this may require that negotiators reiterate their points, as an ambassador said during a Coreper meeting: "I have said this before, but I am happy to repeat." At other times, it may require that an ambassador writes an edit of the text out by hand and passes it on to the Mertens (the assistant diplomat) who will photocopy and distribute the sheet to all Coreper participants, so that they can see the suggested revision in a hard copy in front of them.

Being able to fit into the collective track-change process significantly bears on the result. Power is emergent in these negotiations as it originates from specific social interactions and we cannot reduce it to the meeting of pre-existing national interests (Adler-Nissen and Pouliot 2014). However, as we have demonstrated in this article, how we use technologies both enables and constrains this emergence. Negotiations become a fluid maneuvering through textual edits with an uncertain impact on the final outcome. Ambassadors typically find out whether they won or lost a particular edit, when they read a revised version of the text with consolidated changes, but they do not always recall their starting position. Power is highly situational, embedded in the process of negotiations rather than clearly dispersed between involved parties. Moreover, diplomats do not own the text. Once they have negotiated it, lawyers will interpret it, and this will not necessarily align with the intended meaning that emerged from negotiations. As an ambassador said to his foreign minister "I would be curious to know who is ruling this whole thing" – he meant the European Union.

Conclusion

The digital information and communication revolution has turned everyday multilateral negotiations into a semi-virtual space of constant exchanges and proposed edits. Today, a majority of multilateral negotiations take place via the computer screens, tablets and mobile phones of diplomats, whom distance may separate, but who negotiate 24/7. Track-change diplomacy – negotiating with the help of word processing software, supported by email and digital devices – has made the otherwise long and complicated process of editing documents to reach international compromises, quicker and more collaborative than ever.

But technological advances and the ubiquitous nature of ICT do more than just facilitate negotiations. They also push negotiations in a particular direction, sometimes with unexpected consequences. To understand the role of track-changes, and ICT more generally, we developed the notion of affordance for international relations theory. Technological affordances – the way a technology both enables and constrains the tasks that users can possibly perform – lead us away from the idea that we can deduce the effects of a particular technology from its features. Instead, we can understand technology better by focusing on its enabling and constraining power for particular international practices. The methodological implications of this practice-oriented approach are important. Rather than studying technology in isolation, it is necessary to work inductively to analyze how users employ technology in specific contexts. By turning our attention to the technology-in-practice that scholars often overlook, we can uncover how it shapes international negotiations.

There are three main characteristics of track-change diplomacy the particular affordances of ICT shape. *Shareability* denotes shared authorship, *visualization* means a particular schematized design aesthetics and *immediacy* affords high-speed text circulation. Together these characteristics challenge established wisdom about diplomatic negotiations in institutionalized multilateral settings in at least three ways. Firstly, they affect how negotiators define national positions (as edits to the text more than as substantive positions originating from capital cities). Secondly, they impact how diplomats reach compromises (through collective drafting exercises by circulating snippets and track-changed documents, involving more authors and less time for reflection). And thirdly, they shape what constitutes power (the skillful use of language within specifically set design parameters, circumventing the diverging text edits to assert a preferred meaning). As our analysis has shown, the track-change function – originally intended by Microsoft Word to help a group of co-authors keep track of their changes in documents – may in fact lead to a loss of authorship and control of the negotiation process,

characterized by its networked complexity. Track-change diplomacy can thus provide an additional explanation for the occurrence of pathologies in international organizations that might help scholars to understand not only the outcomes of multilateral negotiations, but also their everyday bureaucratic operations (Barnett and Finnemore 2004).

If international negotiations appear so strikingly different through a technology-in-practice lens, the same is likely the case for other phenomena in world politics, from international conflicts mediated on social media such as Twitter and Facebook to nuclear deterrence and cyber security. Just as barbed wire changed the logics of war in a symbolic and material sense (Barder 2016), digital technology shapes world politics – and does so in ways that designers did not necessarily intend. It is crucial that international relations scholars analyze the technologies that are currently merging physical, digital and biological worlds in the “Fourth Industrial Revolution”. Central to this revolution are technological breakthroughs in fields such as Artificial Intelligence, robotics, the Internet of Things and 3D printing, which will undoubtedly have wide-ranging implications over the coming years. However, international relations scholars need to think methodically about these technologies and analyze the practices they afford, instead of focusing on their abstract or idealized forms. This is the main value-adding contribution we believe a practice perspective can offer a study of technology in international relations.

Supplemental information

Online Ethnographic Methods Appendix, available at <https://www.diploface.ku.dk>, <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/people/view/330594-drieschova-alena> and at the *International Studies Quarterly* data archive

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Ethnographic methods: participant observation, documents and interviews

Rebecca Adler-Nissen & Alena Drieschova

In this appendix, we provide details on our overall research strategy, relevant literature on EU negotiations, the empirical material and context, the collection of data and analytical process. These methodological considerations and choices are important for our analysis, but due to space constraints, we could not fully develop them in the main article.

This article represents collaborative research. As authors, we had different roles in the gathering of the empirical material. One of us (Author 1) was based in an EU capital, employed in a ministry of foreign affairs for one year working on European policy dealing with instructions to Coreper and the domestic side of the negotiations, but also attending several Council working group and Coreper meetings. The other (Author 2) conducted participant observation for two and a half months in Brussels, based in the permanent representation of an EU member state and in the Council, attending many Coreper and ambassadorial meetings. Both authors did rounds of in-depth interviews before and after these stints.

It was our mutual interest in, and hands-on experience with, concrete diplomatic negotiations in the EU that led us to write the article together. By combining our insights and empirical material from observations of negotiations, we were able to develop a deeper and more complete understanding of the fascinating, but understudied phenomenon of track-change diplomacy.⁸

We have structured the appendix in six sections. The first section presents the overall research design and case selection. The second section gives an overview of the EU and Coreper as a site for document negotiation and briefly discusses the existing literature on Coreper. The third section provides methodological details on our participant observation. The fourth section provides details on the different rounds of interviews we conducted. The fifth section briefly presents our analytical strategy and interpretation of the material. We end with a few words on ethics.

1. Research design

The purpose of our research has been to investigate how information and communication technology (ICT) shapes international negotiations with a particular focus on the EU. Our starting point, given our affordance approach, has been to analyse these negotiations from a practice perspective, which means that we look for ‘the action’ in everyday interactions. Thus, for instance, we analysed the drafting of compromise texts with a focus not simply on content, but on all the different processes that go into making that compromise.

⁸ From our initial conversations, we quickly realised that not only had we experienced similar and quite striking phenomena, we were also both convinced of the importance of bringing these phenomena to the attention of scholars of international negotiations. Indeed, if the ubiquitous adoption of information and communication technology transforms the international negotiations we study, we run the risk of our theories becoming irrelevant unless they reflect the changes in those phenomena.

To study track-change diplomacy from this starting point requires an inductive approach. Rather than testing hypotheses explore diplomats' experiences and everyday doings, which then inform our conceptualisation. This analytical process involves (re)constructing the background knowledge and tacit insights of these practitioners, including the intersubjective rules of the diplomatic game and resources that are important for the performance of negotiation (see e.g. Bueger 2014; Pouliot 2007; Adler-Nissen 2014). The benefit of such inductive approach is that it provides insights into lived experience and is often able to point to things that at first sight might appear irrelevant or "non-political" (Wedeen 2010, 261-162). In short, our practice-oriented research design focuses on everyday experiences and behavior to help us gain a deeper understanding of international negotiations (see Klotz and Lynch 2014, 57).

Within the IR discipline, recent years have seen an increasing number of ethnographic and anthropologically-oriented studies, to a degree that there is talk not just of a practice turn, but an ethnographic turn (e.g. Vraști 2008; Rancatore 2010; Wedeen 2010; MacKay and Levin 2015). In terms of interpretation of the practices we observe, we are inspired by Wedeen's rendition of interpretive ethnography, which is "'dual', made up of what the 'natives' say, and what the researcher interprets" (2010, 264). This way of using participant observation and interviews involves stepping back from the observed and uncovering not just what happens, but also how social reality and meaning is constructed in the first place (Holstein and Gubrium 2008, 374-375).

Our research question and approach require that we focus on specific practices and zoom in on a few or one case (Silverman 2011, 56). We focus on one particular case: Coreper, the EU's diplomatic engine room where ambassadors negotiate on a weekly basis. To focus on Coreper requires engaging with at least two other diplomatic sites: the EU delegations (national embassies in Brussels) and national foreign ministries (in the capitals of EU member states). However, most of the action (which our analysis focuses on) takes place on computer screens, mobile phones and tablets when officials and diplomats draft text and circulate it electronically between each other.

With our case selection, we do not aim to sample a representative case to infer or generalize about a larger population. Instead, and in tune with the practice-orientation, the potential of this case to give in-depth information about the phenomenon guided our case selection (Flyvbjerg 2006, 236). As authors we had unique access and possibility to collect detailed information about a process that is usually closed to the outside world. However, as we also clarify in the main manuscript, this does not mean that what we observed is only applicable to the EU. In fact, our observations are relevant for other multilateral organizations, such as NATO and the UN, and for our understanding of diplomacy as such.

2. The EU's Coreper as a diplomatic site

Coreper sits between the EU's Council of Ministers on the one hand and the Council's specialist working groups on the other. Initially it was meant to assist and prepare the foreign ministers' negotiations in Brussels, but today it supports ministers in all their constellations (from trade to security and agriculture). Dossiers pass through it from working groups to the Council. Sometimes (including for some "political" texts such as Council resolutions), this is

simple progression, but often text passes backwards and forwards between the different levels of the Council's decision-making machinery, with the final outcome taking shape. Members of Coreper are in a better place than anyone else in the Council to have an informed overview of current policy developments in the Union. Coreper plays an essential role in many of the Union's high profile, cross-cutting negotiations: it negotiates and adopts EU law (mostly jointly with the European Parliament), it develops foreign and security policy as well as structural and agricultural policies, it adopts the EU budget, it steers enlargement negotiations and it negotiates GATT/ WTO rounds and individual trade disputes. Such negotiations involve judgements about the relative importance of diverse and important policy objectives.

The ambassadors are normally senior diplomats with considerable experience. This, plus their role in preparing the work of the Council of Ministers and the meetings between the Heads of State and Government, gives their views considerable significance in national capitals and permits them to contribute to the setting of negotiating objectives and tactics.

At a Coreper meeting, roles are well-established. Coreper ambassadors play the main role and more junior diplomats and attachés (officials at the embassies, often from other ministries than the ministries of foreign affairs), so-called 'Mertens'⁹ and 'Antici'¹⁰ play secondary roles. There are two meeting rooms at level 50 (actually the second floor) in the Justus Lipsius building, which is the second-most exclusive level (after level 80, reserved for the dinners and gatherings of the Heads of State and Government), reflecting the hierarchy of the Council, and Coreper as the most important forum (only superseded by the Council of Ministers and the European Council). Rooms are decorated with carpets, velour stripes, video screens and flowers, and dress code is formal for ambassadors as well as the translators sitting in booths, providing a solemn and serious atmosphere around the meetings.

The ambassadors

During a Coreper meeting, people constantly enter and leave the room as the topics of the negotiations change frequently – from the regulation of novel foods, over the safety standards of medical devices, to a reduction of plastic bags in the marine environment. Ambassadors are the only ones who remain in the room throughout the meeting. They will usually present arguments by saying e.g. "We, Austria", embodying their state, but just as often they will use ambassador's first name to indicate familiarity. The ambassadors' role is highly institutionalized. What they say and how they say it is important. As in any other social interaction, exaggeration promotes understanding, as do imagery, facts, figures and examples. Generally, it is a good idea to speak clearly and to structure the intervention: "A Coreper classic is – 'I have three points to make'" (Interview, 14.04.2015). Time is limited; an intervention should be no longer than three minutes, and ideally in the form of edits to the text. The ability to make oneself understood, enhances power. Reading instructions or mumbling into the microphone do not advance national interests. A diplomat described the inefficiency of one of

⁹ The Mertens group consists of diplomats assisting Coreper I ambassadors, a representative of the European Commission, a representative of the General Secretariat of the Council and the European External Action Service, and a member of the Council Legal Service. The Group is responsible for preparing Coreper I meetings. The meeting usually takes place on Tuesday at 11 AM, a day before the Wednesday Coreper I meeting.

¹⁰ The Antici Group is similar to the Mertens group and is responsible for preparing Coreper 2 meetings.

his colleagues in the following way: “Nice guy, no doubt talented, but there was not anyone who heard what the man said because he always talked in a low voice and without changing the tone, and then it was just skewed each time he said something” (Interview 07.01.2015).

The circulation of texts

However, in many ways, the Coreper meeting itself is only the tip of the iceberg – one phase – in a continuous and never-ending, networked process of drafting documents. The process of text production for an ordinary legislative act starts in the EU’s executive, a Directorate General (DG) in the European Commission. It initiates the first draft in consultation with member states and stakeholders. All the other Commission DGs can provide their input. Once the Commission as a collective institution agrees on a legislative initiative, it sends the text to the Presidency (usually a member state) of the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament.

In the Council, the Presidency puts the text on the agenda of the responsible working group(s). The national attachés send the text to their respective governments with a request for instructions. The production of instructions is central for any member state. The capital does not just send instructions to the representative, as a document representing the government position, but instructions are a collective achievement. They may go through many iterations and the diplomats “receiving” instructions from home draft them just as much as the ministry “sending” the instruction. At times, the instruction can include input from several ministries, the government as a whole, national parliaments, and the representation in Brussels. Practitioners emphasize three main criteria for a good instruction: it needs to be brief, focused and flexible.¹¹ This is because negotiations are continuous, time is of the essence and Coreper is seen as a problem-cruncher. Negotiators define national interests largely in reaction to what is on the table and adapt to the developments in the negotiations.

With the instructions in hand, the attachés in Brussels attend working group meetings during which they develop a compromise text in drafting exercises. After each round of negotiations, the Presidency circulates the text so that the delegations “can identify which of [their] amendments [the Presidency is] taking on board” (Coreper 1). The negotiation in the working groups often last for several months, until the Presidency decides that the political pressure has to increase, and sets the text on the agenda of the Coreper ambassadors’ meeting. The Antici and Mertens prepare the meetings, and prior to the Coreper meeting, the Presidency circulates so-called “flashes” that provide details of the particular dossiers. They include status of work in working groups, and what the presidency wants Coreper to consider, which could be anything from a long and complicated document to 2-3 selected problems. If Coreper succeeds in its quest to establish a balanced text, the Council of Ministers adopts the text in a silent procedure. Armed with their mandates (which went through more or less careful deliberations in domestic bureaucracies) the national Ministers discuss the remaining agenda items.

In the European Parliament, a similar search for compromise text moves from within the individual political parties to the respective Committee chaired by the rapporteur. Next, the plenary holds a vote. The rapporteur of the European Parliament, the Presidency of the Council and a Commission representative then meet in trialogues to identify a compromise text between the three institutions.

¹¹ Interviews, 10.04.2018, 18.04.2018, see also Nielsen 2015.

Apart from the formal preparation, there is all the informal work, representing the bulk of the activity. Much of this takes place over phone and email between permanent representations, Commissions, and the Presidency. This involves circulating drafts of documents and segments of texts. In addition, capitals are very involved in the drafting process, how exactly depends on how each member state coordinates its EU policy domestically.

Literature on the EU's Council of Ministers and Coreper

Until recently there was limited literature on negotiation dynamics in the Council of Ministers, where ministers, officials and diplomats represent and defend member state interests in long and sometimes tiresome negotiations. However, with the recent publication of new data, there has been a boom in studies of decision-making in the diplomatic “engine room” of the EU (Naurin and Wallace 2008, 3-4). Most of the new data available is about voting, which is only revelatory to a certain extent. Despite qualitative majority voting (QMV) and enlargement, member states take around 80 percent of all decisions by consensus (Häge 2013), but what does that mean in practice?

Lack of access remains a major obstacle to research. Thus, most studies depend on secondary sources such as interviews and official documents. Apart from interviews, many scholars rely on written documents, but only those that are publically available such as Council conclusions. The conclusions, the final outcome of the meetings, however, do not provide information on the negotiation process.

The majority of scholarship on negotiations in the Council draws on theories of bargaining based on the assumptions that states seek to maximize utility and follow logics of consequences. The purpose of these studies is to examine how member states influence decisions, i.e. the degree to which their policy positions are represented in the final outcome (Thomson and Hösli 2006; Warntjen 2010; Polack 2006). These quantitative studies analyze how many of each of the government's preferences are reflected in the final outcome, based on various measures of these preferences. Scholars bracket elements of the negotiation process itself, but assume it to reflect preferences, voting weights, veto power or information access (Bailer 2010; Thomson 2008; Hagemann 2008).

A different strand of scholarship, which seeks to reveal the tacit norms of the Council, is more relevant for our research aims. In his pioneering work, Lewis has uncovered a “method of community” which is a way of negotiating, based on diffuse reciprocity, trust, consensus, and a culture of seeking compromises (2000, 261). Diplomats' socialization to the rules of Coreper helps to uphold the communitarian method (Beyers 2010; Lewis 2005). Yet, largely because scholars lack access, but also because they make theoretical assumptions about where agency and power lies, they bracket the actual negotiation process (for a call for a practice turn in EU studies, see Adler-Nissen 2016).

Another category of insights into decision-making in the Council are media reports and blogs produced before and after important meetings. In this regard, especially the work of Peter Ludlow is important, although he mainly focuses at the level of heads of state and governments (the European Council). Over the last 16 years, Ludlow has produced briefing notes on every meeting of the European Council as well as pre-summit briefings on the eve of the meeting and

evaluations 3-6 weeks after each meeting.¹² All notes are based on oral and documentary sources which are not available to the public. However, while Ludlow's reports offer many striking insights about politics at the heart of the EU, they build on second-hand sources and contain limited information on negotiation dynamics.

3. Participant observation

Author 2 conducted two and half months of participant observation in a member state's permanent representation to the EU in Brussels and at the Council of Ministers of the EU. She applied to the permanent representation to work there as an intern with the purpose to conduct research for her PhD dissertation, which centered on negotiation processes. During the entire time of the internship she took field notes on her laptop, during some meetings while the meeting was progressing, at other times shortly after the meeting had taken place. She shared her office with the personal assistant to the Coreper 1 ambassador. At times, her research came close to shadowing the Coreper 1 ambassador. She always had direct access to his agenda.

The goal of the participant observation was to get as broad an understanding as possible of the everyday operations and quotidian representations of the EU, and how these operations shape the European order. The approach was very open and highly inductive. She sought to maintain as receptive a mind as possible and pay attention to whatever appeared surprising and interesting. At times, she noticed particular developments, but later dropped those strands, because they did not appear to lead anywhere. For example, once the Coreper 1 ambassador organized an informal dinner at his home for a few Coreper ambassadors, and he wanted to use the embassy's silver cutlery, which the embassy's cook refused to borrow him, even against a signature. The controversy lasted for two weeks and perhaps it raised interesting questions surrounding authority in an embassy, but no further incidents allowed to develop this strand of thought.

The scholar engaged in participant observation has to mitigate between experience-near observation and analytical distance. This can become particularly challenging when having to analyze one's own personal role in a situation in a detached scholarly fashion (Wacquant 2004). Specifically, when Author 2 started the participant observation, she was confused as she had to deal with incredibly complex technical files on issue areas in which she lacked expertise, while at the same time, she had to navigate the highly complex institutional environment in Brussel. In order to mitigate this potential personal bias, she observed other people and their embodied reactions, and took note of their comments and thoughts in casual conversations. Additionally, she had at least weekly conversations with the Coreper 1 ambassador and the Mertens (assistant), during which she asked them questions directly linked to the phenomena she was observing to acquire clarification and get the practitioners' own reflections.

Table 1 below indicates which meetings she attended and how many times she participated in those meetings. In the overwhelming majority of meetings, she was a passive observer, but in rare instances, she participated in the negotiations: First, she replaced an attaché twice at a working group meeting of little strategic interest to the member state. Second, she sat at the negotiation table at a Council of Ministers meeting during late hours (again in an issue area that was of little strategic interest to the member state). Lastly, on the last Coreper 1 meeting of the

¹² See Ludlow's notes here: <http://www.eurocomment.eu/peterludlow/>

year, she sat at the Coreper 1 negotiation table, because the Coreper 1 ambassador and the Mertens had already left for Christmas holidays. In these admittedly rare instances, she had the embodied experience of a diplomat involved in the negotiation process.

Beyond the formal meetings listed below, she attended countless informal lunches and couloir conversations during which diplomats were interpreting ongoing negotiations, strategizing, discussing, and reflecting upon possible scenarios. These instances allowed her to get a peek at how diplomats were seeing and experiencing their everyday interactions without directly asking them about their opinion.

The overwhelming majority of the documents she analyzed (Table 2) related to the Coreper 1 agenda, and thus focused on issues of communitarian law, in which qualified majority voting (QMV) is the norm, the European Parliament has the right to co-decision, the European Court of Justice has jurisdiction, and most of the files are of a very technical nature. Yet, during the participant observation she also attended Coreper 2 meetings, and meetings of the Political and Security Committee. These committees deal with a high number of agenda items that fall under unanimity voting, in which the European Court of Justice does not have jurisdiction, and which can often link to high politics.

Interestingly, the Political and Security Committee meets more frequently than Coreper 1 or Coreper 2. Yet, the focus in the committee is not as much on drafting text. The committee spends most of its time involved in lengthy conversations about the political situation in a particular country. It frequently welcomes visitors, such as NATO generals, or UN representatives, whom the committee asks informative questions about the on the ground situation in a particular country, or about a specific policy issue. Foreign and security cooperation is clearly more limited in the EU than cooperation in other issue areas. However, when the committee seeks to establish a common position, release a joint press release, or has to take a stand on a particular issue, it engages in the same forms of textual editing as Coreper 1 or Coreper 2.

Apart from participation in numerous Coreper meetings, during her stint in the foreign ministry, Author 1 also did a round of participant observation in 2015, attending two Coreper 1 meetings and two working group meetings, which have also informed the manuscript. The focus of this participant observation was on the choreography of Coreper meetings and the performance of instructions.

4. Interviews

In addition to participant observations, the manuscript relies on in-depth interviews. As mentioned, the Coreper is a closed body of negotiations and only a limited number of people have access to the meeting room. Due to our professional employment and experiences, however, we have been able to use our network and goodwill to gain access to both junior and very senior diplomats at various stages of the research process. The majority of the interviews we have conducted took place as face-to-face interviews. Yet, because of difficulties in arranging meetings with people from different member states, we conducted a few of the interviews over telephone. Interviews lasted between 15 minutes and one hour and 30 minutes. While Author 1 recorded most interviews after agreement with the interviewee, Author 2 decided not to record interviews and took notes immediately after the interview ended.

One of the challenges of doing interviews to uncover everyday practices is to avoid too much rationalization by interviewees. As Pouliot puts it, quoting Bourdieu, “as soon as he [sic] reflects on his practice, adopting a quasi-theoretical posture [the agent] loses any chance of expressing the truth of this practice and especially the truth of the practical relation of the practice (Pouliot 2013, 51). We handled this challenge by focusing on concrete examples and largely steered away from self-analysis and meta-reflections.

Fundamentally, however, interviews are not a neutral technique, but an interaction between scholar and informant, which of course conventions and context constrain. Here, it is important to note that all informants were somehow of our professional networks and thus felt at ease with the authors. In this sense, we as scholars, were “exploiting this intimacy as an investigation tool” (Amit 2003, 3).

Author 1 conducted almost 150 interviews with officials and diplomats in the period 2005-2010 and in 2015. In 2015, she and her graduate students focused specifically on the choreography and performance of instructions at Coreper meetings. The 2015 interviews are quoted directly in the manuscript while the other interviews function as background knowledge.

Author 2 conducted 47 interviews across permanent representations, the European Parliament and the European Commission (Table 3). Although she initially developed a template to conduct semi-structured interviews, she very quickly stopped following the template, because she adapted the interview questions in every interview to the job position of her interlocutor and to what she had observed during participant observation.

Based on the comments to our submitted manuscript from the editors and the reviewers, encouraging us to provide more context and cast more light on the routines and patterns involved in the negotiations, we decided to conduct a second round of interviews to further investigate the role of ICT in negotiations. Author 1 conducted these interviews and they were semi-structured with specific questions in mind, and thus more scholar-steered than the previous rounds of interviews. Author 1 interviewed six diplomats: two former Coreper ambassadors and two current Coreper ambassadors, one Head of Department (and former Antici) and one senior diplomat in the Council Secretariat (Table 4). The interview guide is in Table 5.

5. Analytical process

Together, our participant observations, interviews and document analysis reveal that collective text drafting is the single most important activity (in terms of time consumption and focus) that diplomats and policy makers in the EU are involved in. Coreper has text drafting and disputes over textual edits as its primary *modus operandi*.

We identified the different elements that led to our theoretical conceptualization of track-change diplomacy inductively from the material listed above in the following ways:

First, we identified the *visualization* of the documents through first-hand experience. Author 1 first experienced the importance of visualization when she received the track-changed documents in her email box during her employment in the ministry of foreign affairs and when

her colleagues discussed them. Subsequently, we have analysed the individual documents. Instead of directing our attention exclusively to the content of those documents by undertaking discourse analysis, a primary focus was on the ways in which different elements in the documents have been visualized. Moreover, participant observation demonstrated that diplomats, because of the sheer overload of documents they receive, skim through those documents quickly, and visual markers allow them to pay attention to the particularly contentious issues in a given text.

Second, we observed the *shareability*, the large number of authors involved in editing a single text during our employment and participant observation and subsequent interviews confirmed it. Relatedly, the loss of authorship initially transpired through diplomats' casual comments in conversations with each other, and became very obvious in an informal meeting between the Council Legal Service and embassies' legal advisers. From then on, Author 2 explicitly asked diplomats and policy makers about authorship and how it worked. Most of her interviewees readily brought up examples of situations in which they had experienced "loss of authorship" themselves.

Third, the *immediacy* and speed of the negotiations was one of the most striking phenomena both authors noticed during participant observation and in their daily work. The speed was striking because of the observed speed at which the documents circulated, the sheer number of documents that circulated, the observed stress levels and haste of the diplomats, the quick glances at a few hundred pages of text, and the speed in the negotiation room.

Fourth, how the text helps produces national interests became most clear to us when we saw how instructions and mandates are actually formulated. Moreover, we both observed it during Coreper negotiations, when we saw how representatives develop their position in response to the text and in relation to the other textual propositions at the negotiation table. It became further apparent when diplomats discussed negotiations in private conversations with their colleagues, and when they talked to us about the negotiations in interviews.

Fifth, the reaching of compromises through textual edits became most apparent when observing the negotiations, but it also transpired from reading the background documents.

Lastly, we observed the power of language and drafting skills during negotiations, when it became apparent that unless a representative comes up with a suitable textual edit, others will not hear her position. We also observed during negotiations the different strategies individual representatives used to make themselves heard.

6. Ethics

Confidentiality is a particular issue regarding the material gathered and analysed for this manuscript. Some of the material is classified or governments and individual officials regard it as potentially sensitive. In addition, national, EU or international law protects some of the information (whether in written or oral form). Both during interviews and participant observation, confidentiality of the shared knowledge and material is respected. In particular, we took great care not to violate trust and confidentiality when dealing with specifically sensitive issues such as information about national positions, numbers, personal views, collegial relations

and more intimate relations and beliefs. In some cases, we have been allowed to share country and individual names.

Our concern with confidentiality explains why we have had to limit direct references to countries and people. A lot has been written about the advantages and drawbacks in relation to anonymous interviews (Seal, Bloom and Somlai 2000; Volker 2004). Apart from the fact that anonymity was often a prerequisite for many of our informants, we must weigh the benefits of revealing names against the potential costs to the participants. Such costs could be journalists misconstruing research findings, or representatives from other member states using the list of names for strategic or political purposes. Moreover, our interviewees' own colleagues might read the text, recognize them and see that they have a more unorthodox position than what they usually express. For these and more reasons, we have hidden the names in the manuscript (for an elaboration of the pros and cons of anonymity in interviewing diplomats, see Adler-Nissen 2014, 212-213).

Table 1 Meetings attended during Author 2's two and a half months of participant observation in the permanent representation of a member state and at the Council of Ministers

Type of meeting attended by Author 2	Number of meetings
Informal meeting between the Council Legal Service and legal advisers at embassies	1
Working group meeting (attachés discussing particular issues before they go on the Coreper agenda)	4
Mertens meeting (preparation for Coreper 1)	8
Briefing between attaché and Coreper 1 representative	10
Coreper 1	15
Coreper 2	5
Political and Security Committee	3
Governmental Committee for EU affairs (weekly video conference at which the vice-ministers or their representatives are present, as well as Coreper 1 and 2 ambassadors)	8
Briefing between a Minister and the Coreper 1 ambassador; attachés and Mertens are also present	5
Council of Ministers (primarily attended in the overflow room, where the meeting is video streamed) –only attended technical Council formations (such as Environment, Energy, Transport, Research, Youth, Culture, and Sport, Agriculture and Fisheries, Competitiveness, and Employment, Social policy, Health and Consumer Affairs)	10

Table 2: Internal documents read and tied to the two and a half months of participant observation

Type of document	Explanation	Number of documents
Bulletin	Update of what has happened in EU institutions over the past week, i.e. which pieces of legislation have been adopted, which topics have been discussed, etc.	1
Presidency non-paper	Discusses a particular topic/issue/piece of legislation, its progress and what still needs to be achieved.	4
Official notes from the Governmental Committee for EU Affairs	Notes taken by a government official, which describe the topics that have been discussed, and the positions adopted at the Governmental Committee for EU Affairs.	1
Program of a minister's visit for a council meeting	Detailed schedule of a minister's visit.	1
Presidency flash	Statement that describes the Presidency's plans and expectations for the next Coreper meeting.	6
Agenda for a Coreper 1 meeting	Detailed agenda of the items to be discussed at a specific Coreper 1 meeting.	7
Provisional agenda for a Council meeting	Detailed agenda of the items expected to be discussed at a specific Council meeting.	11
Official notes from a Mertens meeting	Notes taken by the assistant to the Coreper 1 representative describing what has been discussed at the Mertens meeting.	6
Comments on the Coreper 1 agenda	Responsible attachés describe the issue and negotiating positions of member states surrounding the individual items on the Coreper agenda.	6
Notes from the Coreper 1 meeting	Notes of the responsible attachés describing the Coreper 1 meeting.	6
Draft Council Conclusions	Presidency consolidated draft council conclusions, including highlighted edits.	16
Draft Council Decisions	Presidency consolidated draft council decisions, including highlighted edits.	5
Presidency policy debate	Background document for a debate to be held on a particular policy issue.	5

Instructions for a working group meeting	Instructions describing a member state's negotiation position at the working group level.	5
Instructions for a Coreper 1 meeting	Instructions describing a member state's negotiation position for a Coreper 1 meeting.	99
Instructions for a Coreper 2 meeting	Instructions describing a member state's negotiation position for a Coreper 2 meeting.	1
Background document from the ministry of foreign affairs	Background document for informative purposes for a working group meeting.	1
Draft common declaration on a particular policy issue by a set number of member states	Several member states with a similar position can draft a common declaration if they cannot obtain a sufficient majority in the Council to have a Council position.	1
Proposal for a directive	Proposal for a directive including suggested textual edits.	22
Proposal for a regulation	Proposal for a regulation including suggested textual edits.	30
Proposal for a road map	Proposal for a road map including suggested textual edits.	1
Member state comment on a directive proposal	Individual member states can attach comments to directives if they think that some of their key views were not picked up in the document.	2
Member state comment on a Council decision	Individual member states can attach comments to Council decisions if they think that some of their key views were not picked up in the document.	1
Exchange of views	Informative background document for an exchange of views to be held at a Council meeting.	2
Member state's proposed amendments to a directive proposal	Individual member states can circulate their proposed edits to a directive proposal.	6
Mandate for the delegation of a member state at a Council meeting	Government approved mandate for the delegation of a member state at a Council meeting.	9

Urgent message from the Presidency concerning Mertens meeting		2
Presidency background information for a working group meeting		4
Member state notes from a working group meeting	Notes taken by the responsible attaché describing what has been discussed at a working group meeting.	1
Commentary by the foreign ministry of a member state about a decision from the European Court of Justice	Serves the permanent representation for informative purposes.	1
Presidency note for the establishment of a working group		3
Draft joint report from the Commission and the Council on a particular policy issue	Includes suggested textual edits.	2
Coordination of a common EU position on an external policy issue—draft proposal of the general secretariat of the Council	Includes suggested textual edits.	1
Note from the Council on the use of terminology		1
Total		266

Table 3: Interviews conducted by Author 2

Date	Title	Institution
10.10.2014	Expert	The German Marshall Fund of the United States

15.10.2014	Ambassador	Permanent Representation of a member state
20.10.2014	Ambassador	Permanent Representation of a member state
21.10.2014	Foreign Policy Advisor	European Parliament
23.10.2014	Ambassador	Permanent Representation of a member state
26.10.2014	Media Advisor	European Parliament
28.10.2014	Policy Advisor	European Parliament
28.10.2014	Attaché	Permanent Representation of a member state
28.10.2014	National Seconded Expert	European Commission
28.10.2014	Mertens	Permanent Representation of a member state
5.10.2014	Mertens	Permanent Representation of a member state
7.10.2014	Policy Advisor	European Parliament
10.11.2014	National Seconded Expert	European Commission
13.11.2014	Policy Advisor	European Parliament
13.11.2014	Policy Advisor	European Parliament
13.11.2014	Antici	Permanent Representation of a member state
20.11.2014	Member of the European Parliament	European Parliament
20.11.2014	Attaché	Permanent Representation of a member state
21.11.2014	Attaché	Permanent Representation of a member state
21.11.2014	Ambassador	Permanent Representation of a member state
28.11.2014	Attaché	Permanent Representation of a member state
28.11.2014	Mertens	Permanent Representation of a member state
03.12.2014	Seconded National Expert	European Commission
03.12.2014	Policy Advisor	European Parliament
04.12.2014	Policy Advisor	European Parliament
05.12.2014	Policy Advisor	European Commission
05.12.2014	Member of the European Parliament	European Parliament
05.12.2014	Attaché	Permanent Representation of a member state
10.12.2014	Member of the European Parliament	European Parliament
10.12.2014	Policy Advisor	European Parliament
11.12.2014	Attaché	Permanent Representation of a member state
11.12.2014	Member of the European Parliament	European Parliament
11.12.2014	Ambassador	Permanent Representation of a member state
12.12.2014	Expert	Egmont Institute
12.12.2014	Policy Advisor	European Parliament
12.12.2014	Legal Advisor	Council Legal Service
15.12.2014	Attaché	Permanent Representation of a member state
15.12.2014	Mertens	Permanent Representation of a member state
17.12.2014	Seconded National Expert	European External Action Service

17.12.2014	Attaché	Permanent Representation of a member state
17.12.2014	Legal Advisor	Permanent Representation of a member state
18.12.2014	Attaché	Permanent Representation of a member state
18.12.2014	Seconded National Expert	European External Action Service
18.12.2014	Attaché	Permanent Representation of a member state
18.12.2014	Attaché	Permanent Representation of a member state
18.12.2014	Attaché	Permanent Representation of a member state
19.12.2014	Attaché	Permanent Representation of a member state

Table 4: Interviews conducted by Author 1

Date	Title	Institution
10.04.2018	Ambassador	Permanent Representation of a member state
13.04.2018	Former ambassador	Permanent Representation of a member state
15.04.2018	Ambassador	Permanent Representation of a member state
15.04.2018	[Senior position]	Secretariat of the Council of Ministers
18.04.2018	Former ambassador	Permanent Representation of a member state
18.04.2018	Head of Department and former Antici	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of a member state

Table 5: Interview guide used by Author 1

- Introduction, including the purpose of interview, the need for examples, guarantee anonymity, informed consent.

Questions specifically for former Coreper ambassadors or interviewees with experience from the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s.

- What tools were used during negotiations before email and word processing? Telephone? Pen and paper? Something else? Examples?
- What were the practices / processes / techniques for negotiation before email / the use of word processing functions, track changes, etc.?
- How did you find compromises on specific texts? Were there other techniques for compromising on texts? Which ones?
- How was the pace of negotiations compared to today? How did you keep overview?

Questions for everyone:

- Do you always negotiate on the basis of text? Or do you sometimes use other forms of visualization? For example, charts, graphs, tables with numbers, etc.?
- What is your personal experience using track changes to emphasize, bold, strike, tables, etc. during negotiations? Do these tools convey negotiation dynamics? How?
- Do negotiation dynamics develop differently when you have different tools at your disposal during negotiations?
- What is the main effect of email and word processing on the work in Coreper?
- What are your typical routines, habits and patterns related to handling the track-changes?
- How often do you respond to emails from other Coreper colleagues or from the capital? Can you expect someone to respond to an email at 2 am on a Sunday?
- How important are the different text changes? How do you keep an overview over the various amendments?
- Can everyone make as many track-changes as they want?
- In your experience, who has the greatest influence in the design of the texts? Why?
- How do you use text messages? What role do text messages play in negotiations?
- Bonus question: Article 50 (Brexit). Who has negotiated it?
- Other examples?

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